

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

Boise, Idaho

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News

I plan to avoid the lottery for a while! About February 10, as I was about two-thirds through with this issue of the Newsletter, the hard drive in my new computer failed. About the same time at work my new computer there developed a hardware problem which caused me to lose most of what I had in it. Fortunately, I had resolved to make backups on a regular basis, and saved most things I cared about. What I lost was several weeks of time reloading programs and restoring files, but I did learn some things about my machines and Windows 95 software. For instance, I found that Micron had included a Microsoft mapping program in the CD box with another software package. Without having to restore the program, I would never have needed to open the box, and would have missed it! "Infant mortality" is a fact of life with computer hardware, so I don't fault the manufacturers; the ease of working with their technical support impressed me. They really know their stuff!

There has been quite a bit of e-mail correspondence going on among those of us who have access to that form of communication. Several collectors watch the electronic auctions closely, and some folks are on mail bid sale lists where others are not. All in all, it adds up to another interesting dimension of the hobby. If you get "connected", send an e-mail to one of us and you'll get on the list. Speaking of the electronic auctions, there is an amazing amount of stuff being sold out there. Everything from brand-new merchandise to antiques of all sorts comes up, and the sales are active for just a few days. Other nifty sites combine the offerings of certain types of dealers and let you search their database to find what you want. For instance, if you are looking for a certain stamp, type of postcard, book, etc., search the various databases and you may find the item; then correspond with the owner and strike a deal.

I had a pleasant surprise a while back. One of the fellows who works for me knew of my interest in old cars, so when he found that the car parts outfit his daughter works for was giving away their 1998 car calendars, he got me one. That was neat enough, but on the March page, there was a great color photo of a 1947 Dodge in front of Preston "Pres" Nichole's Deer Flat Mercantile store in Huston, Idaho! You might still be able to get a copy of the calendar - it is put out by Checker, Schucks, and Kragen auto parts stores. I don't know why they feel the need to use different names in different parts of the country, but after a bad experience with Schucks a few years ago, I have my suspicions...

Cleaning Tokens

Greg Manos uses a product called "NEVR-DULL" to clean his tokens. Available from auto supply dealers, it is a fine abrasive applied with a soft cloth. He says it dates to WWII where it was used by the Navy to polish brass. I have seen the results and it looks good to me. Now to find it! Also, Dan Lute has been experimenting with a reverse electrolysis procedure that he promises to write up so we can try it. It works pretty well for dug brass tokens which are heavily encrusted, although it does not take all the stuff off before it starts reacting with the clean areas. On tokens which are just dark, it seems to lighten them up quite well, although it may take the zinc out of the brass alloy first, leaving a copper color.

A Gilmore Item

Dean Rasmussen sent me an interesting item from [A History of Gilmore, Past and Present](#), by Dick and Bob Noll, 1995.

"Pool Halls Through the Eyes of a Youngster: Young Dick Benedict (Tom Benedict's son) said some of his earliest memories of Gilmore are of pool halls. He was just a young kid, but he loved pool halls. For one thing, they would always buy him candy. If there was any way that he could escape and get into a pool hall, he would. He remembers going down the street with his old auntie, jerking loose from her, and making a run for a pool hall. In those days, women couldn't go into a pool hall, so she would stand around outside and wait for someone to come along who would go in and get him. Oh, those pool halls were wonderful, especially to a youngster! There were spittoons, brass rails and poker tables. He still remembers the way they smelled - with dead cigars and stale beer.

"Young Dick Benedict also went to Sunday School, and there he could count on Roy Cope to give him a beer chip. Beer chips were actually tokens worth a nickel. So on Sunday, Roy would give him the beer chip to buy a candy bar and a dime to put in the collection plate. Well, he figured out that the dime would buy more candy than the beer chip, so he spent the dime on candy and put the beer chip in the collection plate. The Sunday School teacher asked him, 'Who gave you that, Richard?' He said 'Woy Tope', so the teacher got after Roy and gave him a really bad time."

The Rexburg Drug Company by Dean Rasmussen

Rexburg was settled in 1883 and grew steadily thereafter. With the arrival of the St. Anthony Railroad line from Idaho Falls in 1899, Rexburg's continued growth seemed assured.



James W. Webster was a successful sheep rancher who foresaw that Rexburg was going to grow rapidly, so he began investing in Rexburg businesses. He bought shares in the Fremont County Journal, the Rexburg Creamery, the Rexburg Produce & Meat Company, and, with partner Timothy J. Winter, founded the Rexburg Drug Company which was incorporated on April 1st, 1903.

The corner lot on Main and South 1st East was conveyed to the Rexburg Drug Co. by Webster & Winter in December, 1903. By the fall of 1904, a large, two-story stone building had been completed on the site, and was known as the Webster-Winter Building. This early Rexburg postcard shows a parade down Main Street with the Webster-Winter Building at the left of center. The Rexburg Drug Company occupied the first floor, and Dr. W. H. Mack had his optical business on the second floor for many years. He is the same Dr. Mack who built the Mack's Inn Resort at Trude siding in Island Park. When Madison County was created from Fremont County in 1913, the new county rented space on the upper floor of the building until the new courthouse could be completed in 1920.

DR. W. H. MACK
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James W. Webster was the president of the Rexburg Drug Co., but hired pharmacists to run the business for him. Roscoe Bigler worked there from 1907 until 1915 when he bought the Orson Waldrom Drug Store and changed the name to the Bigler Pharmacy. In 1915 the Rexburg Standard reported "the store has a well founded, reliable reputation. The fountain is very popular and the Rexall remedies have made the store distinctive. The Rexburg Drug corner is really a busy corner, the most centrally located in town and the efficiency of the drug store makes it popular."

In March of 1920 the Joy Drug Store chain bought out the Rexburg Drug Co., making it their 6th store in Idaho. The building still stands and now houses a Subway sandwich shop and a beauty parlor.



There are embossed pharmacy bottles from this business, as well as other advertising ephemera, but as far as I know there is only one token known. A friend found it in his grandmother's sewing box after she died. It is listed as #RE-25 and is 21mm brass.

Well, I finally made a trip to Salmon to start things going for the get-together. I reserved a conference room for Saturday July 18th from 6:00p.m. until 12:00 midnight at the Stagecoach Inn. The cost is \$35, which we'll all have to share. I made my reservation but everyone else will need to call and make their own reservations. The rate there is from \$54. to \$60. depending on # of people and beds. This is the only motel in town with conference rooms and is right on the river. The phone # is 208-756-2919 and if you mention the Idaho Token Collectors get-together they would appreciate it. I'll send you some business cards I picked up to send to whom ever. I wrote the conference room # on them. I'm also sending you a brochure about area ghost towns. It has some good history of some of the towns. The Stagecoach Inn is just across the river on U.S. 93 heading North towards Northfork. The Wagons West motel is another block north and is from \$44 to \$54. a night. The Suncrest Motel is on the southwest part of town as you come in on U.S.93 from Challis. It has the most reasonable rates and is from \$34. to \$43. per night. All of them are clean and nice. There is too much snow in the mountains to map out a trip but I'll try to get back there in May or June and figure out a fun side trip. Oh, the phone # for Wagons West is 1-800-756-4291 and for the Suncrest is 208-756-2294. The Museum there is nice but doesn't open until 10:00 A.M. It might make a good meeting place if that's not too late to start. It's on Main Street just before you cross the bridge. Salmon is a neat old town with a lot of mining history near by. I

visited with an old fellow who showed me where some of the old token-using businesses were located. In fact he had worked at the Mint and for Chris Van Stratt.

"I'm going to try and have a list of Whetstones put together for the get-together so if you haven't sent me your list yet I'd appreciate it. That will save me a phone call. I found a Blazing Rag Saloon and a Hotel Leesburg / Leesburg, Idaho at a local antique shop! Just Kidding! I only dreamed it.

Happy Hunting, Dean [mail him at 427 Terra Vista Dr., Rexburg, ID 83440]
"P.S. Our get-together is right in the middle of their tourist season so they all suggested making reservations soon! If any one has input on which towns you'd like to visit let me know."

Boise's Victory Pennies

During the years after the outbreak of World War II, American producers were called upon to help supply the needs of the Allied countries. When the United States became directly involved in the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the American economy shifted to a wartime basis, putting the production of defense items on a higher priority than that of non-essential goods. The American public felt the effect of the war economy when various foodstuffs were rationed, the purchase of War Bonds was urged, and scrap metal, paper, and rubber drives were held.

Since copper was declared a strategic commodity, the war effort had priority over the needs of the United States Mints and even though over 2.8 billion one cent pieces were coined in the early war years of 1940 – 42, a serious shortage of cents developed in the nation. In late 1942 the Salt Lake City Federal Reserve Bank announced that "our supply of pennies is limited and we have been unable to replenish our stock from the US mints as coinage has been discontinued because of a scarcity of coinage metals." To help alleviate the situation, the Boise Retail Merchants Bureau met and announced in the November 26, 1942 [Idaho Daily Statesman](#):

BOISEANS SOON WILL BE USING PENNIES MADE OF CARDBOARD

Paper one cent pieces which can be spent anywhere in the Boise Area just like regular pennies will be issued beginning Monday, the Boise Retail Merchants Bureau announced Wednesday.

The step will be taken with permission of the US district attorney's office to meet a growing shortage of pennies, Secretary E. G. Harlan said.

Each paper 'penny' will be rectangular in shape, about as big as a postage stamp, and will bear a 'V' on one side and an inscription on the other, Harlan said. Printed on light cardboard, they will be redeemable until June 1, 1943.

The 'scrip' will be redeemed in all nearby communities Harlan said.

Printing of the pennies is necessary because of a policy of the Federal government under which new pennies no longer are being minted, according to Harlan, because of a metal shortage.

The 'pennies' will be sold by the Merchants bureau and the money placed in a redemption fund. Care has been taken to make the design of the pennies too difficult to counterfeit, Harlan explained, and all arrangements are complete for full use of the paper.



The next day local papers carried the story that Treasury officials had disclosed on November 26 that one cent pieces would be minted of steel coated with zinc to free copper for the war industries as soon as Congress passed legislation to permit the use of substitute materials. The Boise merchants received this notice too late to change their plans, however, and proceeded with the printing (done by the Beacon Lithography Co.) of the pieces. They anticipated a two or three month delay before seeing any of the new steel cents.

On Monday, November 30, the Statesman reported:

Five thousand paper pennies went into circulation in Boise Monday, as printing presses and merchant ingenuity appeared to have solved the shortage of 'coppers' in this section of southwestern Idaho.

The new pennies were a big hit with the public, merchants reported. Many customers 'bought' paper pennies along with merchandise, explaining that they intended to keep them as wartime souvenirs. One store alone placed an order for 7500 to be delivered this week.

This news story was picked up by the national wire services and soon appeared in newspapers throughout the country, bringing demand for the paper pennies from all over. On the 30th, Secretary Harlan reported that collectors and agencies in Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio, Chicago, Kansas City, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and many other cities had ordered from one to one hundred of the paper pennies. "And we are sending samples to such cities as Salt Lake City and Idaho Falls where the penny shortage is already acute", he said.

Soon, however, Boiseans were startled to read in the December 6 Statesman:

RECALL THOSE PAPER PENNIES? 'MORGY' SAYS THEY'RE ILLEGAL

The status of Boise's patriotic paper penny was being weighed Saturday after Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau warned that the use of paper one-cent and five-cent pieces is illegal.

To this announcement Secretary Harlan said that the Boise pennies would remain in circulation until an official order to the contrary was received from the Treasury Department. After the December 7 meeting of the merchant association, Secretary Harlan explained under the headline "WHO MENTIONED PAPER PENNIES? THEY MEANT 'VICTORY COUPONS'", that "we have issued coupons, not money. The bits of paper are not represented as coins. Each one states on its face that it is issued by the Merchant's Association and may be redeemed up to next June." Apparently the Treasury Secretary's statement was a general warning about private coinage and the Boise issue quietly continued as the Statesman reported January 29:

BOISE'S VICTORY PENNIES STILL ARE BEING WIDELY CIRCULATED

Boise's paper 'victory pennies' still are being circulated and will continue to serve this community and nearby towns until Uncle Sam's new steel coppers arrive in quantity.

The square coupons were placed in circulation by the Boise Chamber of Commerce Nov. 20, after a consultation between merchants and U. S. District Attorney John Carver as to some means of meeting a penny shortage which left merchants without necessary coins with which to make change.

E. G. Harlan, secretary of the chamber, said Thursday. 'The pennies have proved their worth many times over and we'll keep them in circulation until the new government issue of steel cents is released. There are 100,000 of them in use right now.'

Harlan said he had received no 'follow-up' on a statement by Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau shortly after the Boise plan was announced to the effect that the paper coins were illegal. At that same time he explained that the distribution of the pennies had been approved by Carver and Boise banks, and that the distribution would continue until that approval was withdrawn.

Harlan explained : 'These are not counterfeit coins in any sense of the word. They more in the nature of a due-bill or a coupon for one cent which all the members of the Merchants bureau agree to accept interchangeably. They bear no resemblance to an actual coin and couldn't possibly be mistaken for real money.

'We had a penny shortage that was hampering business, particularly in certain types of stores; the paper coupons provided an answer and solved the problem.' He added that merchants' organization from New York to San Francisco have inquired about the plan.

Boise's 'pennies' are square cardboard pieces bearing a large letter 'V' and a picture of a minute man.' [they were 25mm square and the same on each side.]

As the number of actual cents in circulation increased due to the release of the 1943 steel cents, the Boise pieces faded from use. The Merchants' Bureau advised the public that they would redeem the coupons, but it was estimated that only about 500 of the 100,000 issue were turned in. They are still somewhat available to collectors; the rarity of the series is the uniface examples, of which I have only seen one example. The piece is #BQ-82.

Best,

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